



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
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Life in the Time of Covid-19

“May you live in interesting times.” This oft-quoted phrase is allegedly an old Chinese proverb, but a little research shows that it really isn’t. It’s construed as a blessing that can be turned on its head to be very ironic. To say that 2020 has been interesting (so far) is a remarkable understatement. My hope is that the second half of 2020 is dull and unremarkable. Hey, a man can hope, right? Yes, I remember that there’s a presidential election in the fall. Oh, well...

Back in 2010 when Governor Paterson closed Thacher and many other state parks in an effort to save money, I was the go-to person for Capital Region reporters looking for sound bites and quotes about the situation. I remember some of the reporters. I remember where some of the interviews occurred. However, I only remember one question that only one journalist asked me out of the hundreds of questions that I was asked during those months: “Why do we need parks?”

The question floored me. “What do you mean?” “Why do we need museums?” “Why do we need art?” According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, we don’t need any of these things to survive – to exist. And without them, we would do just that – exist.

If that young journalist could see 10 years ahead, she would see why parks are not a luxury, but a necessity. In her defense, she was doing her job – asking questions. I think I answered that they’re necessary to any society that values their citizens’ well-being. It probably wasn’t those exact words but I remember conveying that sentiment.

During NY on Pause, attendance at all state parks has risen dramatically. I receive updates from the Office of Parks via social media and some parks are closed due to an overabundance of visitors on weekends. A trip through Thacher on a given Saturday or Sunday is a testament to why parks are necessary. People who haven’t been to the park in a long time are coming back. The stress of this pandemic has people looking to nature for solace and comfort.

During the 1980s, a term emerged in Japan called *shirin-yoku* which roughly translates to “forest bathing.” You may have heard of this. People began to retreat to natural settings to escape the stress of their lives and to calm themselves. This is what we’re seeing now in NY. Turn on the news for a few minutes or read the papers and your cortisol level and blood pressure begin to rise. Walking in natural areas calms us. It centers us. It comforts us. It causes us to realize that despite the awful situation we’re in right now, the natural environment is there like it’s always been. We enjoyed it as children and it can transport us back and let us escape, even if only for a little while.

The thousands of people coming to Thacher and the other state parks are a testament to the necessity of parks. When we get to the other side of this pandemic, the park may be less crowded but it will be just as necessary.

- by John Kilroy

The Origins Behind the Days of the Week

Every-day we follow the ancient Pagan tradition of giving thanks to the gods without even realizing it. In ancient Mesopotamia astrologers named the days of the week after gods that were believed to rule the lives of mortals. Centuries later the Romans, who were beginning to use a seven-day week, adopted names to fit their own gods. These were then changed by the Germanic people to fit theirs. It is the Germanic and Norse names that have lived on to today. So here is your daily homage to the gods.

Sunday or Sun's Day is the name of a Pagan Roman holiday. In folklore it was thought to be a lucky day for a child to be born. Many ancient societies worshipped the sun and sun gods. The most common known is the Egyptian sun god Ra. He was thought to be the lord of time.

Monday, from the Anglo-Saxon Monandaeg is the day people payed homage to the goddess of the moon. The ancients believed that there were three unlucky Mondays in the year. The first Monday in April, the second Monday in August and the last Monday in December.

Tuesday is named after the Germanic god Tiu (or Tia) - a god of war and sky. He is often associated with the Norse god Tyr, a defender god in Viking mythology.

Wednesday means "Woden's Day" or Odin in Norse. The direct translation is violently insane headship. Woden was the ruler of Asgard, the home of the Norse gods and was thought to be able to change shape.

Thursday is Thor's Day. Named after the Norse god of thunder and lightning. He is most often depicted

holding a giant hammer. During the 10th and 11th centuries when Christians tried to convert the Scandinavians, many wore emblems of Thor's hammer to show defiance to the new religion.

Friday is named after Freya. She was the wife of Woden and the goddess of love, marriage and fertility.

Saturday came from Saturn's Day. Saturn was a Roman god associated with wealth and plenty. It is the only English week-day still associated with a Roman god.

It is surprising how many things in every day life can be tied back to ancient religions and customs. Almost all of our Christian holidays can be traced back to long before Christianity even began. So remember, when you say the name of the day of the week you are honoring ancient gods and when you celebrate most holidays you are celebrating ancient Pagan rituals.

- from the porch, by Brian Horl



*These drawing of Norse God Thor and Goddess Freya
by Johannes Gehrts were published in 1901.*

from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/file:Freya_by_Johannes_Gehrts.jpg

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2020

As of now, board meetings are tentatively scheduled for July 8, September 9, and November 11, 7:00pm at Thacher Visitor Center. *Please stay tuned for updates due to Covid-19.*

While Thacher Visitor Center and Nature Center remain closed for the time being, the park and its trails are open. The exception is the Indian Ladder Trail, which will not be opening this season because the trail does not allow for social distancing.

Stay healthy, stay safe!

Infra-red motion sensing cameras are up and running in the park! Check out what they caught this spring!



A black bear, woken from recent slumber, a porcupine chewing on a bone, and some very nosy deer. Thank you, Katie!

One of our members wrote this poem and kindly shared it with us. "In this time of stress and uncertainty, we can learn from nature. I thought about what trees could teach me and wrote this prayer:"

Let me be like a tree, bending and stretching to reach the light.

May I always be growing, no matter my circumstances.

May I let go of that which no longer serves me.

May I be a source of support and refuge for others, and may I lean on my companions in my need.

Though I may bend for a time to strong forces, may I rise and stand once more.

Let me live my life fully until the last root is severed.

- by Kathy Magee



Wild Senna

Native Plants!

In spite of several late snow storms – Spring is happening! And that means the Native Plant Sale! Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Native Plant Sale will be virtual.

If you are interested in purchasing native plants contact Laurel via email *beginning Saturday May 16th*:

Laurel.Tormey-Cole@parks.ny.gov

for an updated availability list. Orders will be filled in the order in which they

are received as long as supply lasts. Many plants are in limited supply. We will do our best to fill as many orders as possible. Each order will receive a confirmation email.

(Please note: in order to accommodate as many folks as possible - Our Virtual plant sale will NOT be available to anyone who has done a Jan./Feb. pre-order.)

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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Please feel free to call board members with questions or suggestions.

Many thanks to John Kilroy, Brian Horl, Kathy Magee, Katie Blaylock, Laurel-Tormey-Cole, Sigrin Newell and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter.

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Want to contribute? Please email me at cgervasi@albany.edu. Christine Gervasi—Editor

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By Pearson Scott Foresman, from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_bear_\(PSF\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_bear_(PSF).png)

Next: Please stay tuned for updates on our Board Meetings

Buzzin' Blueberries

A bear can eat 16,000 blueberries in a morning, as you may remember from my recent article. Every one of those berries was pollinated by a process known as “buzz pollination”. Pollen is expensive for the plant to produce and it benefits the plant if the pollen is directly transferred to the stigma of another female flower. Pollen is sequestered in each anther which has a hole in the tip. Pollen is shaken out like a pepper shaker. This anther structure can also be found in cranberries, tomatoes, and eggplants.

Bumblebees and other native bees (but not honeybees) eat the protein-packed pollen from these anthers. To get the pollen, a bumblebee opens the clutch on her wings to put them in neutral, and revs up her wing muscles. This produces intense vibration. The electrostatically charged positive pollen is shaken out and is attracted to the bee’s oppositely charged body hairs. Most of the pollen is groomed into pollen-baskets on its back legs, but some remains on the body to be carried to the next flower.

Check out this video from KQED and PBS Digital Studios <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZrTndD1H10>, or search for “Buzz Pollination” to see short videos of vibrating bees being sprayed with this explosive pollen.

A pollen-collecting bumblebee vibrates at a clearly audible middle C. Blueberries can be found on the Hop Field Trail and near the Nature Center according to Nancy Engel, director of the Center. Blueberries bloom in May. Come up to the park and listen for the amazing phenomenon of buzz pollination.

- by *Sigrin Newell*



<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/AprilMay/Gardening/Gardening-for-Pollinators>

As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at www.friendsofthacherpark.org